

# *Press Information*

## **THE ART OF THE MERRION**

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The spectacular collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Irish art hung throughout The Merrion, Dublin's most luxurious 5-star hotel, is widely considered to be one of the most important in Ireland. Created from four magnificently restored Listed Georgian townhouses, the grace and elegance of The Merrion's interior provides the perfect setting for the paintings. The result is a dramatic and successful marriage of classical architecture and contemporary art.

True to the spirit of 18<sup>th</sup> century arts patronage, Martin Mooney, one of Ireland's finest young painters, was commissioned to paint a series of works for the elegant neo-classical stairwell in The Merrion's Front Hall. The Front Hall remains much as it would have been when the house was built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Plain white walls show off the original cornices and plasterwork, leaving Mooney's murals as the main decorative feature. These, in subtle, warm colours, depict imaginary classical ruins, buildings and architectural details. The pronounced architectural element of Mooney's style is particularly apt for The Merrion's Georgian interior.

After attending the University of Ulster, Mooney studied at Brighton Polytechnic, followed by a Post Graduate Degree at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. His work has been widely exhibited in both one-man and group exhibitions at galleries including The Solomon Gallery, Dublin; Waterman Fine Art, London; Theo Waddington Fine Art, London; The Royal Academy, London and The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin. Mooney's work has also been exhibited in Boston, Barcelona, Toronto and Johannesburg.

Mooney is the recipient of several prestigious awards including the Richard Ford Award, Royal Academy, London and the George Campbell Memorial Grant. His work is included in many important private and corporate collections in Ireland, Britain, Spain, the USA, Canada and Hong Kong.

Paul Henry (1976-1958), one of Ireland's best-loved artists, is best known for his paintings of the West of Ireland. Henry was born in Belfast and studied in Paris where he was influenced by French modernism and realism. His style, which may appear simple, is actually the product of much thought. The majority of his work is landscape painting although he also liked to paint the country folk of the Western seaboard. 'Fisherman on the Beach' can be found in the reception of Patrick Guilbaud's restaurant.

Nathaniel Hone (1831-1917) who was born in Dublin, spent many years in France where he met the leading figures of the Barbizon School. His paintings often depict the area around Malahide where he lived. The broad, brooding vistas of sea, sky and coastline make him one of the greatest Irish painters of his time. 'Harbour View' is hung in the Middle Drawing Room, to the left of the fireplace.

The pioneering Irish abstract painter, Mainie Jellet (1897-1944) has a special place in the growth of modern art in Ireland. She is best known for her close association with Evle Hone, with whom she studied Cubism in Paris later introducing it to Ireland. 'Achill Horses' (1938) and 'Madonna and Child' (1936) hang in the Reception Room and 'Seated Nude' (1940) can be found in the Cocktail Bar No. 23.

Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) was born in Belfast and grew up in Scotland. He studied in France where he was heavily influenced by late French Realism with its typical green-grey tonality. Later, as he became a fashionable portrait painter in London, his brushwork became freer but also coarser. His second wife Hazel, is remembered for her close association with Michael Collins, whom Lavery painted on his death bed. 'Good Friday, Fuenterrabia' (1917) is hung in the Reception and 'Portrait of a Lady' (1900) can be found in the Second Drawing Room.

Louis le Brocqy (1916 -), born to a prominent Dublin family of Belgian descent, is probably the most cosmopolitan Irish painter of his generation. Largely self-taught, he has spent much time in France and London. In the post-war years he mixed with the English avant-garde; Francis Bacon was one of his close personal friends. At first a traditionalist, Le Brocqy later adopted a Cubist-influenced style. He has since become famous for his series of portraits of W.B. Yeats, Beckett, Lorca, Joyce and others. Le Brocqy has enjoyed many international honours, including a prize at the Venice Biennale and a recent large retrospective exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. 'Man Writing' (1915) and 'Women in White' (1951) hang in the Front Hall and a 'Tapestry - Aubusson' (1950) can be found in Patrick Guilbaud's Restaurant.

William Leech (1881 - 1968), like most Irish artists of his time was strongly drawn to France and French art. His style is conservative but not conventional, with a sensitive feeling for a light and fluent technique. Leech was equally successful painting luminous interiors, out-of-doors scenes, and portraits of his family and friends. 'Aloes', 'A Sunny Afternoon and Concarneau' (1908) is hung in the Third Drawing Room.

Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) was born in Cork. He emigrated at an early age and became a society figure in Regency London where he counted Dickens and Thackeray amongst his friends. He was a versatile and productive artist, painting genre scenes, portraits and historical pictures. His greatest achievements are the two large murals in the House of Lords, 'The Death of Nelson' and 'The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher on the Field of Waterloo'. 'Lady in a Printer's Workshop' is found in the Front Hall and is the focal point of the room.

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) was the poet, W.B. Yeats', younger brother and the son of the great portraitist John Butler Yeats. Jack B. Yeats is today regarded as Ireland's greatest painter. A lack of any formal art training, a bold technique and a brilliant use of colour gave rise to his reputation as a visionary and an original artist. 'The Hour of Sleep' (1951) which hangs in the Front Hall, is almost a self portrait. It was painted towards the end of Yeats' life and shows how he is preparing himself for his death. 'The Old Grass Road', Kinsale (1925) hangs in the No.23 Cocktail Bar.

Roderic O'Connor (1860-1940) was an unusual and highly gifted painter. Until recently, however, little was known about his life. A cultivated man, he spent many years in France where he became friends with Gauguin. He admired Gauguin's work and was influenced by his style. His paintings are now much sought after by both private and public collectors. 'Church Chailly en Biere' (1932), 'Red Rocks and Sea' (1898), 'Bowl of Fruit' (1926), 'Bowl of Roses', 'Roses Thé' and 'Orchards and Mountains' (1913), hang in the O'Connor Room at Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud. The highlight of the collection at The Merrion are O'Connor's 'Red Rocks and Seas' (1898) and 'Breton Girl' (1902) can be found in the Third Drawing Room.

Mary Swanzy (1882-1978) has a unique style. Cubist art was an influence in her early work but in later works, as her style matured, she moved towards Surrealism. Critics often remark on her fantastical imagination and her remarkably unusual use of colour. After travelling extensively, Mary Swanzy moved to London in 1962 from where she continued to exhibit in Dublin. 'Landscape with White Tower' c. (1927-1929), 'Cubis Study of Trees' c. (1925), 'House and Palm Trees' c. (1923-1927), 'Peasant Woman on Pathway' c. (1930), 'Village with Church and Tower' c. (1919-1920), 'Forest and Flowers' c. (1925), 'Red Roofs and Bare Trees' c. (1930), and 'The White Bird' (1943) are found in The Cellar Restaurant. 'Striped Field and Pink Trees' c. (1930) is hung in the Reception of Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud.

William Scott (1913-1989) was born in Scotland, he grew up in Enniskillen and always regarded himself as Northern Irish. He was a pupil of the St Ives School of the 1950s which favoured essentially an international-abstract approach. His unmistakably spare, uncompromising, yet richly 'painterly' style won him an international reputation and this was recognised in 1972 by the Tate Gallery. 'Dream Series I to V' (1969) the only series that Quinn painted, hang in Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud along with 'Frying Pan, Funnel, Eggs and Lemons' (1950). A major William Scott, 'Still Life with Pots and Pans' can be found in the Third Drawing Room.

Many more paintings grace the walls of The Merrion, including, 'A New Dawn' (1981) by Trevor Geoghegan b. (1946), 'The Convalescent from Waterloo' by William Mulready (1786-1893), 'Near the Four Courts', Dublin (1805) and 'Market Square', Ennis (1805) by William De Lond Turner (1767-1826), 'Net Menders' (1884) by Mary Webb Robinson c. (1850-1890), 'Boy in Classical Landscape' by Thomas Frye (1710-1762), 'Chickens in a Field' (1872) by Leon Goabe de Bellee (1846-1891), 'Still Life with Flowers' (1893) by

Paul Biva (1851-1900), 'Landscape with a Farmhouse' (1897) by Armand Auguste Balouzet (1858-1905), 'Moonlit Harbour Scene' (1763) by Follower of Claude Joseph Vernet, 'Wooden River Landscape' c. (1700) and 'Christ Healing the Sick at Bethesda' c. (1620) by the Flemish School, 'Tapestry - Lille or Aubusson' c. (1650-1675), 'Tapestry - Bruxelles' c. (1650) by Heinrich Reydams Workshop, 'Gombeen Men 1' (1955), 'Ampersand (Discretion)' (1991) by John Boyd b. (1955), 'French, after Houdon', (19<sup>th</sup> C Bronze) by Diana, 'A View of the Dargie - Lovers Leap' by James Arthur O'Connor (1792-1841), 'Village in France' by Daniel O'Neill (1920-1974), 'Entrance to the Château' by Patrick Hennessy (1915-1980), 'Winter Landscape' by Jan Van Kesel (1641-1680), 'View of Tivoll' by George Mullins and 'Moonlit Land' by James Forrester.

At Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud works include 'Girl with Doll' by Daniel O'Neill (1920-1974), 'Woman in Headscarf' (1873) by Enrico Braga, 'Extrados' (1996), 'Eclipse' (1996), 'Interior' (1992), 'Farm Buildings' by Stephen McKenna. (1939), 'The Travellers' (1964) by Norah McGuinness, 'Jammets Restaurant' by Harry Kernoff (1900-1974), 'Abstract' (1994) by Marla Simmons Gooding b. (1939), 'Still Life' (1990) by Brian Ballard b. (1943) and 'Basket of Apples and Pears' (1841-1891) by Eugene Claude.

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